

South Coast Air Quality Management District

Executive Order 21-01

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of California has proclaimed a State of Emergency throughout the State resulting from the spread of respiratory illness due to a novel coronavirus (known as COVID-19) on March 4, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner (“Coroner”) has confirmed that there exists an urgent need for additional human crematory services to deal with the increased demand for such services resulting from deaths due to COVID-19, and other causes; and

WHEREAS, the Coroner has determined that the current rate of deaths in Los Angeles County is more than double that of pre-pandemic years, and anticipates that another surge is approaching as a result of the New Year’s holiday, since deaths tend to occur 4-6 weeks after gatherings, and the capacity of the decedent management system, including hospitals, funeral homes, crematoria and the Coroner’s office is being exceeded; and as of January 15 over 2700 bodies are currently being stored at hospitals and the Coroner’s office ;and the 28 crematories in Los Angeles County have the resources and capability to perform more cremations they cannot due to regulatory limits; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has confirmed that the growing backlog of cremation cases within the county constitutes a threat to public health; and

WHEREAS, many of the permits issued by South Coast AQMD and currently in effect for human crematoria contain limits on the number of cremations or amount of human remains that may be cremated each month; and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Coroner has requested that South Coast AQMD suspend such limiting conditions in order to protect public health and respond to the emergency; and

WHEREAS, under the provisions of Rule 118(d)(1), I hereby determine that strict compliance with the limits on numbers of cremations or amount of human remains cremated at qualifying crematory facilities, and with any rules underlying such conditions, would delay critical actions necessary to protect public health and safety and to respond to the urgent need created by the emergency.

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me under Rule 118(d)(1), I hereby suspend permit conditions limiting the number of cremations or amount of human remains cremated for qualifying human crematoria that are located in Los Angeles County or have an agreement with the Los Angeles County Coroner and meet the following conditions:

1. The facility provides written notice to South Coast AQMD – via electronic mail to the Emergency Relief Mailbox (EmergencyRelief@aqmd.gov) – of its intent to exceed permit limits;
2. The facility is within 15% of reaching or exceeding one or more applicable limits;
3. The facility is operating during cremations with a secondary chamber operating at not less than 1500 degrees Fahrenheit, if the facility has a temperature gauge to confirm its operating temperature, and
4. The facility keeps and maintains records of all operations exceeding its permit limits, which shall be provided to South Coast AQMD upon request.

All other terms and conditions of the permit and other air quality rule requirements will remain in full force and effect.

This order shall expire at the end of the tenth calendar day after issuance – that is, at 11:59 p.m. on January 27, 2021 – unless extended pursuant to Rule 118(d)(2) by a further order before that time.

Dated: 17 January 2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Natri', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Wayne Natri

Executive Officer